DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 382 935 CS 012 146

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TITLE The Mysterious Case of the Detective as Child Hero: Sherlock Holmes, Encyclopedia Brown and Nancy Drew as Role Models?
PUB DATE Apr 95
NOTE 25p.; Paper presented at the Annual Joint Meetings of the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association (Philadelphia, PA, April 12-15, 1995).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adolescent Literature; *Childrens Literature; Intermediate Grades; Literary Genres; *Reading Attitudes; *Reading Interests; *Reading Material Selection; Reading Research; Role Models; Surveys
IDENTIFIERS *Detective Stories; *Mysteries (Literature); Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union Sch Dist VT

ABSTRACT

In the mystery genre, the one characteristic that the enduring figures of Sherlock Holmes, Nancy Drew, and Encyclopedia Brown have in common is a rational mind. The source of their strength is their ability to think and think well. A study examined some typical examples of the mystery genre in young adult literature and surveyed children and adults regarding their enjoyment of mysteries. Two sets of questionnaires were developed. In the first set, 32 adults and 29 children responded to a long questionnaire distributed through Bennington College (Vermont) students to a random set of adults and children. The second questionnaire was a condensed version, rewritten for 79 fifth- and sixth-grade children at a Bennington public elementary school and specifically addressing questions about Sherlock Holmes, Nancy Drew, and Encyclopedia Brown. Results indicated that: (1) children gave suspense as the reason they liked mysteries, while adults focused on escapism as the appeal; (2) children ranked bravery and risk-taking as important qualities about detectives, while intelligence ranked highest for adults; (3) males preferred male detectives, while females preferred either female detectives or mixed pairs; and (4) the "Goosebump" series (in which the irrational and the supernatural create disorder and fear) was chosen by 71% of the girls and 35% of the boys as their favorite mysteries. Results also indicated that children selected mysteries based on the cover and the publisher's "blurb." Over the years, the covers of Nancy Drew mysteries and Encyclopedia Brown mysteries have changed to reflect changing styles and attitudes. (The survey instruments are attached. Contains 16 references.) (RS)

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The Mysterious Case of the Detective as Child Hero: Sherlock Holmes, Encyclopedia Brown and Nancy Drew as Role Models?

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Popular Culture Conference
April, 1995
Philadelphia, PA.

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The Mysterious Case of the Detective as Child Hero: Sherlock Holmes, Encyclopedia Brown and Nancy Drew as Role Models?

Much to the frustration of librarians and teachers, children are fascinated by mysteries. From picture books through Young Adult novels, the mystery holds its readers enthralled. Series books are enlivened by the challenges of crime; even the Baby Sitters Club involves sleuthing. What is the appeal of mysteries? Are they a screen for sexual curiosity? A vicarious outlet for feelings of powerlessness in a confusing world? Are they a moral equivalent of a war between good and evil? Do they provide children with models of bravery, cleverness and intellectual power? Has anyone asked children what they think? And if they did, would the answers be illuminating?

Besides examining some typical examples of the genre, this study includes interviews with children about their enjoyment of mysteries. Adults were also questioned to see if there is any similarity between children and adults in their stated explanations for the appeal of the mystery story.

Although there is some continuity between the general reading habits of children and adults with genre literature providing the bulk of the reading for both populations, we might expect that their perspectives differed. Despite the arguments for the disappearance of childhood (Postman, 1982; Sommerville, 1982), children are assumed to have different developmental tasks than do adults. Children's lives are also constrained by their economic and social dependence on adults.

In the past fifteen years, with a growing concern about basic literacy, the gatekeepers of knowledge, librarians, teachers and parents, have become more tolerant of children's mystery reading. Any reading is better than no reading and the hope is that children will progress to literature of a higher quality. Reviewing best seller lists, this optimism is not necessarily justified.

Some teachers have found that the reading of mystery stories can lead to increased writing skills on the part of children as they analyze the elements in a mystery story and write their own. (Gold, 1983; Vardell, 1983). Not only is the form motivating, but its elements are easily discernible. A strong plot line enables readers to keep their attention focussed and the characters of the detective, victim and suspects are recognizable in their various permutations. In their examination of the appeal of mysteries in series, Moran and Steinfirst (1985) discuss conscious and unconscious factors. On the surface the stories are easy to read and understand. The content does not challenge the reader who is comforted by the predictability of the plot and characters. Moran and Steinfirst also contend that this sameness and sense of an ultimately ordered world contrasts with the problem fiction for children which, while raising important issues for children, may be too intense. Children, like adults, may turn from serious and realistic books to those that are reassuring because the resolution of the problems are rarely in doubt.

In looking at the unconscious elements, Moran and Steinfirst turn to Erik Erikson's model of development. Focussing on the childhood and young adult stages of Industry vrs Inferiority and Identity vrs Role Diffusion, these professors claim that the mystery series helps children and teen-agers work through these developmental conflicts. The series heroes and heroines demonstrate the competency children in the middle years are struggling to achieve. For teen-agers, the older versions of these young detectives show autonomy as well as mastery. As they struggle to achieve their identity, the characters seem to be clear about who they are and what their objectives are.

Young Adult mystery writer Joan Lowry Nixon (1993) says that the mystery plot has to have two levels. There is the problem of the crime which must be solved in synchrony with the resolution of the main character's personal problem. In some recent mystery series, characters are more realistically portrayed than are some earlier detectives like Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys. For example, in Nixon's The Dark and Deadly Pool, (1987) Mary Elizabeth needs to work at a summer job. Although attractive, she feels

awkward about her height and her clumsiness, lacking the calm self assurance of Nancy Drew. However, if we view mysteries as contemporary fairy tales then even vulnerable protagonists must have qualities that allow them to triumph over the dangerous tests the villains set for them.

Encyclopedia Brown seems the quintessential hero of the middle years of childhood. He lives in an idyllic town with appreciative parents and friends and he has mastered the kind of knowledge children this age are attempting to master. He knows all the answers. What elementary school child does not wish for that ability. Moreover, if, as children often suspect, adults, specifically Encyclopedia's dad, the police chief, get credit for the intelligence of their offspring, Encyclopedia represents the triumph of children's cleverness over an unjust hierarchy .

At another level of social and emotional development, Nancy Drew represents the ideal adolescent. At time she seems far more than an adolescent, but then it is difficult to reduce a cultural icon to an age group. Nancy is capable, independent, resourceful and likable. As Anne McLeod (1987) has pointed out Nancy focuses on mystery like a professional. Despite her willingness to undertake danger, McLeod sees Nancy's rational approach to sleuthing as one of her major strengths.

As the most rational of detectives, Sherlock Holmes is an adult figure with whom children can identify. Many women recall the importance of reading Nancy Drew in their childhoods. She has been cited as role model by Alison Lurie, Nancy Pickard, Sara Paretsky and others. However, both men and women remember reading Holmes. They continue to do so as the three hundred and more scion societies of the Baker Street Irregulars demonstrate.

Children's editions of Sherlock Holmes are not new. Like Gulliver, Don Quioxte and other literary giants, originally written for adults, Holmes has been adapted for children in many guises including comic books. The Avon Camelot 1981 series has tried to maintain the quality of the original tales. Although focussed on the action and the

dialogue, much of the relationship between Holmes and Watson is retained. Introductory paragraphs provide the reader with information about the historical context of the particular tale. The preface to the Greek Interpreter, for example, clarifies the role of the men's club in Victorian England.

On the other hand Murray Shaw's Match Your Wits (1990) series strips the language and the atmosphere to the barest plot essentials, presenting a version of Holmes that resembles Encyclopedia Brown. The clues to the mystery are isolated at the conclusion of the story to alert the reader to the way in which Holmes solved the mystery.

The enduring figures of Holmes, Nancy Drew and Encyclopedia Brown have in common the rational mind. The source of their strength is their ability to think and think well. For children and adolescents who are vulnerable in terms of the economic and physical strength of adults, being smarter is a realistic and achievable goal. A vicarious, but reasonable source of power may be the appeal of some of these mysteries for their young readers

The analysis of any popular culture text is not a simple one as the work by Christian-Smith and Radway on the romance has shown. The text exists in a changing context so that the popular culture of one age may be perceived as the high culture of another. Shakespeare wrote for the groundlings as well as the lords and Dickens serialized novels were enjoyed by a wide range of readership. The reader is also an active participant, bringing different levels of experience, understanding and skill to the process of interpreting text. Children reading the bowdlerized texts of Little Women or Sherlock Holmes in 1995 bring a different sensibility to these stories than children reading the original texts in 1895. Neither the literary or social critic nor the naive adult or child reader provides the definitive interpretation. Each perspective enriches the other for the student of human behavior.

We may not agree with Plato's injunction against the poets, but we can not seriously believe that what we read does not shape our ideas about the world. Harriet

Beecher Stowe may not have been "the little woman" who started the Civil War, but she framed many readers' ideas about the issues of that war. Children with little direct experience of the world are vulnerable to underlying messages and themes in the books, television and movies that fill their lives. Both children and adults are more likely to be uncritical about the ideas and values that they absorb through the entertainments they enjoy. Our task in looking at popular culture, therefore, is to examine both text and reader to better understand their interaction.

Two sets of interviews were done for this study. The first involved a modification of Radway's questionnaire on the romance, adapted to deal with mysteries. Thirty-two adults and twenty-nine children responded to this survey. In the adult survey, twenty were women and twelve were men. In the children's survey, there were fourteen girls and fifteen boys. The ages for the adults ranged from 19 to 53 and for the children from 8 to 12. The questionnaire was a long one with twenty seven choice questions and only one open ended question; the last which was " Briefly tell why you like mysteries." The questionnaire was distributed through Bennington College students to an assortment of random adults and children. There was no demographic information required beyond age and gender. Since this was a pilot study, the size is relatively small and may not be representative of the larger groups. Although there is no way of knowing how truthful the respondents were, there seemed to be an engagement on their part as demonstrated by remarks that were written in on the survey. For example, the question, "What kind of detectives do you like? a. male, b. female, c. team of males and females" received the comment , "That's a stupid sexist question." To the question "How many books do you read during a week?", the first choice was 1-4. An adult respondent wrote, "This should be how many a month. Nobody reads that many books a week."

The second questionnaire was a condensed version, rewritten for children and specifically addressing questions about Sherlock Holmes, Nancy Drew and Encyclopedia Brown. These questionnaires were distributed to 5th and 6th graders at a local

Bennington elementary public school by a teacher. There were thirty-seven boys and forty-two girls who responded. For the boys, the ages ranged from 9 to 13 and for the girls from 10-14.

In this survey there were 18 questions, half open-ended and half with fixed choice responses. Although these questionnaires were completed in school, once again the comments by the respondents suggest a certain honesty. To the question of how many books do you read a week, one boy answered, "I read one book every two weeks." or another replied, "1/2 book." Twenty-two or 59% of the boys report reading every day and 37 or 88% of the girls also reported daily reading. These encouraging figures for children's daily reading may be misleading since this set of questionnaires went through schools where, as one child explained, children have to read every day.

The children handled the longer survey as easily as they did the shorter and more focussed one. Although this data has not been statistically analyzed, there are certain trends which are evident. Children in both surveys preferred mysteries because they were scary. Both children and adults indicated that they rarely or never talked about mysteries.

In the questionnaire completed by both children and adults, children most often gave suspense as the reason they liked to read mysteries, while adults focussed on escapism as the appeal. Children also indicated more often that they liked to find out about different places and settings. Whereas intelligence ranked highest as the quality adults most liked about detectives, children ranked bravery and risk taking as more important. Adults saw a sense of humor as a important ingredient of the detectives that they liked while this was less important for the children. Boys preferred male detectives while girls preferred either female detectives or mixed pairs. This pattern was consistent with adults' gender preferences.

One girl provides insight into the evolution of reading mysteries. " I started really reading with mysteries because I wanted to get to the end of the book to see what happened. Then I kind of stopped reading mysteries because I could always figure out the

end before the end of the book and that would ruin the ending. But I still like a "good mystery."

This view may also be considered in the light of an adult woman who reported, "I like re-reading the mystery books I read as a child. They are entertaining and comfortable. I know all the endings but that's ok with me- I like remembering how I felt as a little girl enjoying them for the first time."

In the longer survey both children and adults frequently mentioned Sherlock Holmes, Nancy Drew and Encyclopedia Brown. Most of the adults, male and female, cited these three and the Hardy boys as mysteries they read when they were younger. However, in the shorter, survey when asked specifically if they had read any books about Holmes, Nancy and Encyclopedia, only six boys out of 37 indicated that they had read Holmes and Encyclopedia and only one had read Nancy Drew. This represents 19% of the number of boys. For the girls. there were fifteen affirmative responses about Sherlock Holmes, twelve for Nancy Drew and eleven for Encyclopedia Brown out of forty-two respondents. Since some of the girls had read about more than one of these detectives, the actual number of girls reading them was 23 or 54 %. When asked their favorite mysteries, 35% of the boys and 71% of the girls indicated Goosebumps, a series by R. L. Stine who was also cited the most as favorite author.

How and why do children select these stories. In the first mystery survey, boys and girls said that they most frequently decided to read a mystery based on the cover and the publisher's blurb. The cover of Welcome to Dead House, (1992) a Goosebumps book, shows an inclined view of broken steps leading to a foreboding house whose half open front door reveals a red glow. At the right hand lower window, a figure, somewhat animal in shape, peers out from that same red glowing background. The rest of the house is a dark purply blue. The angle of the house with its two pitched roofs is elongated. A bare tree with spiky branches is on the left hand side of the house. In small white letters above the far roof are the words, "It will just kill you." This dark image with its jagged outline

is superimposed on a reddish background. The book title is in white beneath the picture with the reddish Goosebumps designation dripping from above onto the picture. The author's name is above Goosebumps in large but simple black letters.

Turning to the back for further information, one finds a smaller segment of the picture on the front cover, the open door with its glowing interior. The design of background and foreground once more suggests dripping blood. "Look Alive!" is the heading.

> Amanda and Josh think the old house they have just moved into is weird. Spooky. Possibly haunted. And the town of Dark Falls is pretty strange, too.
>
> But their parents don't believe them. You'll get used to it, they say. Go out and make some new friends.
>
> So Amanda and Josh do. But these new friends are not exactly what their parents had in mind.
>
> Because these want to be friends...
>
> ...forever

Under a dark line is the injunction, "Reader beware-you're in for a scare". This is followed by two titles also available in the series. There is a coming attraction for one of the titles at the end of the current book, a segment of the story.

In Goosebumps books one of the recurring themes seems to be the dangers of moving, the uncertainty of new relationships, the instability of the familiar. People are not what they seem to be. Moving into a new house in a new town Amanda and Josh are in danger. The prose in this book seems geared for children who have avidly watched Speilberg and Lucas' movies or Tales from the Crypt. Amanda, having just discovered that her new friend is dead is threatened by him until her brother Josh appears with a halogen flashlight.

> "Ray moved his arms to shield himself from the light. But I could see what was happening to him. The light had already done its damage.
>
> Ray's skin seemed to be melting. His whole face sagged, then fell dropping off his skull.
>
> I stared into the circle of white light, unable to look away, as Ray's skin folded and drooped and melted away. As the bone underneath was revealed, his eyeballs rolled out of their sockets and fell silently to the ground." (Stine, 1992,

p 96-97)

This is a Scholastic Apple Paperback recommended for ages 8-12. Meanwhile, back in Idaville, also recommended for ages 8-12, Encyclopedia Brown Takes the Case

> Idaville looked like many seaside towns its size. It had two delicatessens, three movie theatres, and four banks. It had churches, synagogue, and lovely white beaches. And it had a certain red brick house on Rover Avenue. (Sobol, 1988, p.3)

Idaville also has the most peculiar pattern of crime. If we are to assume that "America's Sherlock Holmes in sneakers", solves all his cases while he is ten years old, we must also assume a large population of larcenous children and deceitful adults. Fortunately Bugs Meany is the worse menace Encyclopedia faces, but what is the community to do about the incompetence of Police Chief Brown who must rely upon his son for all but the simplest of cases. Perhaps we can see some of the reasons why Encyclopedia Brown is not as popular as he once was. Why should a ten year old ponder The Case of the False Teeth when he or she can see skulls rattling around a graveyard? School is not terrifying because children don't know the answers to a test. School is terrifying because their teacher is a vampire.

Although the cases Encyclopedia Brown solves do not change, the book covers do, in recognition that children do judge a book by its cover. A 1970 edition of Book #5 shows a light green, red and white drawing of Encyclopedia on circus grounds watching a strong man accosting a costumed boy. The figures of Encyclopedia and his friends are young, freckle-faced and eager. The vision is a benign Norman Rockwell version of small-town conflict. For a 1988 edition of Book #10, a photograph like painting shows Encyclopedia, Scoop and a defiant Sally menaced by a large and glowering Bugs who is in the foreground and moving towards them on a threatening angle. The cover of Book # 16, redrawn in 1993, shows a large picture of a thoughtful and older Encyclopedia, magnifying glass in hand with a large house in the background. Surrounding the larger

photograph are smaller ones with details from the various cases. Crime has clearly become a more serious matter.

Over the years, the book covers of the Nancy Drew books have also reflected changing styles and attitudes. However, Nancy Drew would not be found pictured in the visual world of R. L. Stine or Christopher Pike with its neon lettering and vivid scenes. The cover of Bury Me Deep (1991) is rather tame, compared to others in the genre. An attractive, brown-haired girl in white blouse and green shorts, as described in the book, is laying flowers on a tombstone with the name Mike engraved on it. The skeletal hand in the foreground emerging from the grave is the only bizarre detail in an otherwise normal cemetery scene. "They buried Mike. But not deep enough." is the small inscription under the book's title.

In Bury Me Deep Jean Fiscal is a heroine for our times. She has had to save money to go on a vacation to Hawaii and throughout the book, she is worried about how much things cost. We are told on page 5 that "Jean might not have wanted to lose her virginity in Hawaii, but she wanted to come close." Although Jean is regularly visited by visions of a dead boy who is seeking retribution for his murder, she is plucky and resourceful. After only one lesson in scuba diving, she is able to undertake perilous adventures underseas with assurance and skill. In the middle of a book filled with sexuality and violence, overt and implied, there is a substantial section given over to a detailed description of scuba diving; how one uses the equipment, what are safe practices and what are the dangers. For child readers who read mysteries for information as well as suspense, they will learn a great deal about this particular activity. Perhaps because the scuba diving is essential to the plot, this didactic interlude does not slow down the action. Indeed, the episode does much to explicate the character of Dave, one of the suspects in the murder.

Although Pike's writing will not win any literary prizes, he avoids the adverbial excesses of some series books. For example, Nancy and Jean each encounter a young man on the first pages of their adventures.

" Nancy's bright blue eyes glinted mischievously as a teasing smile played at the corners of her mouth. She had noticed the tall, handsome, sandy-haired young man flashing George a quick friendly smile when they first arrived near the starting line of the Cactus Marathon, a twenty-six mile race held in Tucson, Arizona. He was tall and lanky and even from thirty feet away Nancy could see that his eyes were a brilliant blue" (Keene, 1994, p. 1)

"The fellow sitting beside her didn't have typical good looks, but she didn't hold that against him. She preferred interesting-looking guys, and he certainly was different. There was a gentleness in the lines of his face, an innocence. He had a frail build and carried himself carefully. He looked as if he had seen little of the outside world. His pale skin shone even in the poor light coming through the cloud-clad windows." (Pike, 1991, p. 10

Contrasting the greater complexity of prose and the plot lines between the Nancy Drew and Christopher Pike books, and recognizing that Stephen King is often the next level to follow, it seems that when children tire of one level of formula fiction, they move to another. When a child can anticipate the ending too easily. he or she is ready to move on to the next. If this is true in the plots, is it also true about the type of detective.

Some children had difficulty identifying their favorite detective when asked on the survey because as they explained, Goosebumps books did not have the same detective throughout the series. However, when asked, If you wrote a mystery, what kind of a detective would you write about?, most of the children responded with names like Nancy Drew or Sherlock Holmes. One girl said, "A kid detective who is stupid in school, but a good detective."

Do we see in this description the theme of the child whose ability is not appreciated but who, like the third son or Cinderella will be recognized eventually? Perhaps the idea of the detective as a rational being who can bring order to a chaotic world is not completely missing from contemporary children's world view.
Sherlock Holmes is a presence in many children's mysteries. Not only is Encyclopedia Brown continuously compared to him, but he is a guiding light for Paris MacKenzie, the heroine of Elizabeth Howard's series set in the 1900s. He is a character in Robert

Newman's The Case of the Baker Street Irregular (1978). Holmes' twin Shadrach, cut from an early draft by Conan Doyle, summons the Starbuck twins to London to redeem him by discovering a missing Doyle manuscript in Lasky's Double Trouble Squared (1991). Even when Holmes is not directly a character, the child protagonists in these horror-mystery tales try to make sense of the chaotic world in which they find themselves.

How does the presence of the supernatural in books help children deal with their developmental tasks? In The Ghost Next Door (1993) when Hannah discovers that she is the ghost, she feels good that she saves Danny from her fate. She is also assured that she will be with her parents when she returns to the other life. If we see these books as metaphors that enable children to deal with issues of evil with courage and problem solving, we can understand why the anxiety and distrust that are a part of contemporary life are reflected in them. However updated she may be, Nancy Drew is a child of the Depression and reflects those values. Encyclopedia Brown offers children the serener picture of post-war world of affluence. In the Goosebump series, the irrational and the supernatural create disorder and fear.

The lack of clear cut boundaries between the world of the living and the dead is not confined only to mysteries. The ghosts which haunt these tales may be kin to the more benign shades that inhabit the fantasy and science fiction novels which also provide vehicles for dealing with moral issues. For children whose lives are stressed by divorce, urban crime, or family pressures, and whose loving adults may appear at times transformed into monsters or alien beings, creatures who slither out of dark places may seem easier to deal with than problems cast in more realistic forms. In the Goosebumps books, children still escape the worst of the evil. Are the dismemberments in these books worse than the horrors of Grimms fairy tale The Juniper Tree with its cannibalism and retribution?

Fairy tales evolved out of troubling times to give comfort that justice would be done somewhere, sometime. Mystery novels emerged from the conflicts and stresses of an

urban and industrial age. Children's literature developed from the conditions of universal schooling. These forms reflected their times, but they also shaped children's views of the world. The tales of horror and suspense that children now enjoy may provide an outlet for their contemporary concerns, but will today's children look back with the same nostalgia for these books which adults have for Nancy Drew, Encyclopedia Brown and Sherlock Holmes?

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Mystery Reader Survey

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions about reading mysteries.

Age_____

Male_____ Female_____

1. What kind of books do you like to read best?

____a. biography
____b. historical fiction
____c. westerns
____d. historical romances
____e. contemporary romances
____ f. mysteries
____ g. science fiction
____ h. comic books
____ i. fantasy
____ j. none. I don' t read for pleasure
____ l. other (please specify)

2. How many books do you read during a week?

____a. 1-4
____b. 5-9
____c. 10-14
____d. 15-19
____e. 20 or more

3. How many mysteries do you read during a week?

____a. 1-4
____b. 5-9
____c. 10-14
____d. 15-19
____e. 20 or more

4. Do you read every day?

____a. yes
____b. no

5. About how many hours per week do you read?

____a. 1-5 hours
____b. 6-10 hours
____c. 11-15 hours
____d. 16-20 hours
____e. 21 hours or more

6. Which of the following best tells what you usually do once you've begun a mystery?

____a. I only continue reading it when I'm in the mood.
____b. I read a few pages each day until I'm done.
____c. I read as much of it as I can until I'm interrupted or have something else to do.
____d. I won't put it down until I've finished it unless it's absolutely necessary.

7. How often do you discuss mysteries with others?

____a. never
____b. rarely
____c. sometimes
____d. often

8. Who do you discuss mysteries with most often?

____a. mother or father
____b. brother or sister
____c. friend
____e. other (please specify)

9. How often do you reread mysteries you've already read?

____a. never
____b. rarely
____c. sometimes
____d. often

10. Where do you get most of the mysteries you read?

____a. bookstore
____b. library
____c. supermarket
____d. borrow from a friend
____e. borrow from a relative
____f. other (please specify)

11. If you buy mysteries how often do you purchase hardcover mysteries?

____a. never
____b. rarely
____c. sometimes
____d. often

12. which of the following kinds of mysteries do you read?

____a. hard boiled dectective
____b. spy thriller
____c. locked room puzzle
____d. cozy
____e. historical
____f. amatuer detective
____g. procedural
____h. regional
____i. true crime
____j. thriller
____k. private eye
____l. other (please specify)

13. Which of the following kinds of mysteries are your favorite?

____a. hard boiled dectective
____b. spy thriller
____c. locked room puzzle
____d. cozy
____e. historical
____f. amatuer detective
____g. procedural
____h. regional
____i. true crime
____j. thriller
____k. private eye
____l. other

14. Which of the following best describes what usually makes you decide to read a mystery or not?

____a. I like the cover
____b. I have already read something by the author and liked it
____c. I like the title
____d. The publishers blurb on the front and back cover makes it sound interesting
____e. Someone else recommended it to me.
____f. other (please specify)

15. How often do you read the endings of mysteries before reading the whole book?

____a. never
____b. rarely
____c. sometimes
____d. often

16. Which of the following best describes what you do when you realize you don't like a book that you have already begun reading?

____a. I put it down and never finish it.
____b. I read the ending to see how it came out
____c. I always finish it even if I don't like it.

17. After you have finished a mystery which you liked, what do you most often do with it? (check only one)

____a. I put it on a bookshelf to keep although I sometimes lend my mysteries
____b. I throw it away
____c. I give it to a friend or relative
____d. I donate it to a library or charity
____e. other (please specify)

18. Which of the following reasons best describe why you read mysteries? Please pick the three reasons which are closest to your reasons and rank them from the most important one (1) to the third most important one.

____a. to escape my daily problems
____b. to learn about faraway places and times
____c. to learn about different people and settings
____d. for simple relaxation
____e. the challenge of the puzzle
____f. because reading is just for me. It is my time.
____g. because I like to read about smart detectives
____h. because reading is better than other kinds of activities
____i. because in mystery stories everything is usually solved in the end.
____j. because I like the suspense
____k. because I know however dangerous things are, they will usually turn out alright.

19. How do you like stories to be told?

____a. by the detective as in "I was surprised..."
____b. by the detective's friend
____c. by a third person who knows everything
____d. by a third person who only knows what the detective knows

20. What kind of detectives do you like?

____a. male
____b. female
____c. team of males and females

21. What do you like best about detectives? Please pick three and rank with one the highest.

____a. intelligence
____b. bravery
____c. strength
____d. sense of humor
____e. independence
____f. caring
____g.risk taking
____h. part of a team
____i. works alone
____j. has an unusual job
____k.is young
____l. other

22. What are your three favorite mysteries? Please give titles in order.

1._____
2._____
3._____

23. Who are your three favorite authors? Please list them in order.

1._____
2._____
3._____

24. Who were three favorite mysteries when you were younger?

1._____
2._____
3._____

25. About how many hours a week do you watch television?

____a. 3 hours or less
____b. 4-7 hours
____c. 8-14 hours
____d. 15-20 hours
____e. 21 hours or more

26. When you do watch television, what do you watch most often? Please select only one.

____a. movies (either regular films or made for TV movies)
____b. sports
____c. cartoons
____d. hour long dramas
____e. mysteries
____f. situation comedies
____g. variety or specials
____h. documentaries
____i. game shows
____j. public television
____k. other

27. Briefly tell why you like mysteries.

Mystery Reader Survey

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions about reading mystery books.

Age_____

Boy_____ Girl_____

1. What kind of books do you like to read best?

2. How many books do you read during a week?

3. Do you read every day?
____a. yes
____b. no

4. What mystery books do you like best?

5. What do you like about mysteries?

6. Who is your favorite detective?

7. Who is your favorite mystery writer?

8. Have you ever read any books about: Sherlock Holmes_____
Nancy Drew_____
Encyclopedia Brown__

9. How many have you read of these books have you read?

10. What do you like about these books?

11. What don't you like about them?

12. If you wrote a mystery, what kind of a detective would you write about?

13. What is the best mystery book you have ever read?

14. How much television do you watch each week?

15. What is your favorite television. program?

16. Do you like to watch mysteries on television?
a___yes
b___no

17. Do you talk with your friends about mysteries?
a___yes
b___no

18. Do you write book reports about mysteries?
a___yes
b___no